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## Chapter 1.

# *The Wartime Organisation of Australian Agriculture*

### i.—The War and State Intervention.

THE impact of the war upon all forms of social and economic organisation in this country has been revolutionary. Australians had become accustomed, in the quarter century which marked the breathing space between two wars, to an increasing degree of State intervention in the business life of the nation, and in the relationships between employers and workers. It might have been anticipated that by a peaceful evolution the Australian social system would have developed a compromise between State socialism and individual capitalism, with certain basic guarantees as to the security of the ordinary man.

The war has snapped the thread of that peaceful evolution, and two factors which have arisen as its direct result, foreshadow a system quite different from any which the ordinary Australian might have envisaged.

On the one hand there is the drastic extension of Government intervention not only in the sphere of the business of the community, but in the very lives of the individuals who comprise the community. At one sweep of the pen the Federal Government has taken the most extensive powers of direction over the employment of individuals, and has made effective its power to send men and women, civilians as well as military, from one end of Australia to the other.

The institution of rationing again has given us in the sphere of essential food and clothing, direction of a kind never previously envisaged in Australia.

The control of national credit policy has been brought directly into the hands of the Government. A multitude of directorates have made many private companies nothing more than employees of the Government, and while the principle of profit has not been abolished, it has been drastically limited by price control and taxation of various kinds.

The picture of the Australian citizen of 1942 is very different from that of the citizen of 1938. In four years he has been compelled to place himself at the complete disposition of the State authority, to be directed as to where he will work, for how long he will work. He is forbidden to change his employment, liable to have that employment changed for him by the arbitrary decision of a Government official, without consultation, in the name of the national war effort. In many respects the ordinary Australian lives in conditions which resemble those of the Roman citizen in the hard days of Septimius Severus rather than the days in which he was born and spent his early years.

This complete regimentation of the individual and of industry to serve the needs of war appears to many as the pattern of our social organisation in times of peace. If this total direction by the Government is necessary to secure the division both of money on the one hand and of men and materials on the other to produce the sinews of war, so total

direction of both will again be necessary in the period of reconstruction to ensure co-ordination of the national economic program, through which the rehabilitation of the men of the fighting services and the munition workers may be achieved.

Prior to the war, it was not considered a serious possibility that the Government should take on itself the detailed regulation of economic life and the direction of the life of the individual. The war has shown us that it CAN be done and that in certain cases it WILL be done. It must now be regarded as a serious possibility that this kind of State regulation and direction will become permanent.

In the sphere of agriculture, Government intervention has advanced to a stage which few would have considered possible five years ago. The machinery for the regulation of agriculture has been described as follows, by the Victorian Director of Agriculture (H. A. Mullet, B.Agr.Sc.)\*

## ii.—Commonwealth Organisation in Agriculture.

"The Commonwealth Government is responsible for the direction of the war, including the production of essential foodstuffs. State Departments of Agriculture are subject to such direction, and they form part of the machinery for stimulating agricultural production, and their organisations have undertaken considerable war work.

Broadly speaking, the normal administrative machinery controlling Australian agriculture is as under, but, as will be seen later, this has been considerably modified:

- (1) The Commerce Department, assisted by various Boards representative of producers and exporters, is the organisation which administers the legislation regulating exports.
- (2) The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is the body responsible for fundamental agricultural research.
- (3) The six State Departments of Agriculture are responsible for the administration of the legislation regulating production and conduct research, investigation, and extension services.

Co-ordination between the Federal authorities and between each of the State authorities is effected through the Standing Committee on Agriculture and the Australian Agricultural Council.

On the Standing Committee, the Commerce Department and each of the State Departments are represented by their respective permanent heads. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is represented by one or more of its members. The Standing Committee deliberates upon agricultural problems, both administrative and technical, and prepares and recommends proposals and plans for the guidance of the Australian Agricultural Council, which consists of the Minister for Commerce and the Ministers of Agriculture of the six States.

Where necessary, representatives of particular industries place their views before the Council, and, at times, mixed committees, comprising representatives of particular agricultural industries and the members of the Standing Committee, prepare plans for the Council.

## iii.—The Commonwealth Food Council

In addition, the Commonwealth Food Council, under the chairmanship of the Ministers of Supply, exists to deal with urgent food supply problems.

On the Council the following Commonwealth Organisations are represented:

The Supply Department,  
The Commerce Department,  
Prices Commissioner,

Department of War Organisation of Industry,  
Man Power,  
Rationing Commissioner,  
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research,  
Navy, Army and Air Force, and a  
Representative of the Allied Forces.

The Controller of Defence Foodstuffs is the Executive Member.

In close touch with the Council are the Commonwealth Statistician and the Australian Nutrition Council.

The functions of the Food Council are: To plan production of foodstuffs throughout Australia; to ensure that both service and civilian needs are met, and to provide for equalised distribution and control throughout Australia.

The Controller of Defence Foodstuffs deals with service requirements of the armed forces, and a special section of the Commerce Department handles civilian needs.

The Food Council is assisted in each State, except Victoria, by an advisory Council under the chairmanship of the State Minister for Agriculture. In Victoria no Advisory Council has been established on the ground that as the Department of Supply has its headquarters in Melbourne, it can readily obtain any technical advice it needs from its own technical officers there, and from the Department of Agriculture of Victoria.

The Agricultural Council and the Standing Committee on Agriculture are linked with the Food Council through the Representatives of the Department of Commerce, which Department maintains the secretariat of the Agricultural Council.

It will be acknowledged that this is a truly formidable list. When to it is added the innumerable Boards which have come into existence since the last war, it will be understood that many farmers in the first place are unable to distinguish the essential from the unessential in these organisations and, losing heart, are clamouring for complete freedom from them all.

\* Journal of the Victorian State Department of Agriculture.

## CHAPTER II.

### *The Necessity For Organisation*

**D**ESPITE the natural reaction against all forms of organisation which vents itself in the periodic demand for the abolition of all Boards, there can be no doubt that order in the sphere of primary production can only be secured by some form of control.

What is important is that the right people should do the work of regulation, and that they should act upon the right principle in so doing.

Perhaps some would be inclined to debate this point, but a little reflection as to the results of leaving agriculture to unrestricted free enterprise should clear away any illusions on this subject.

There is probably no sphere of our national life in which a claim for the intervention of outside bodies is made so frequently, and with so much justification, as in the sphere of agriculture.

#### NECESSITY FOR INTERVENTION

It is quite obvious that a solution of the problem of rural debt cannot be achieved without Government intervention. In the world of the twentieth century, the marketing of primary products between countries inevitably falls within the ambit of national policy. It is becoming increasingly obvious that marketing will be only one part of the broader aspect of international relations. Even the home market itself must be regulated if the interests of all producers, as well as the consumer, are to be protected.

An example with which all wheat farmers are familiar at the moment is the question of the carriage of wheat to the silos. This is a small point, perhaps, to the city dweller, but the percentage of the individual farmer's crop which can be contained in the silo is a matter of the greatest importance to the farmer. When there is insufficient space in the silos to take the whole of the yield, it is inevitably a matter of regulation as to whether it is to be first come first served, or whether a certain quota should be allotted to each farmer.

The whole of agriculture bristles with the same kind of problem. In times of war the problems become multitudinous in number and overwhelming in importance.

To deny that there is a problem, and to leave the decision in all these questions to chance, would lead to the most complete chaos—a chaos all the more dangerous because it would suit the interests of the large landholders only, whether private individuals or financial institutions, and spell the doom of the small family farmer.

#### DOOM OF SMALL MEN THREATENED

The cry for unrestricted free enterprise in the past has always come from the powerful magnate anxious to be free from the trammels which would limit his avenues of profit. The small man would always be at his mercy, if the law did not intervene to regulate his activities in the interests of the common good.

The point has been more fully developed in an article which the writer contributed to "Rural Life," the organ of the National Catholic Rural Movement, in December, 1942. The following excerpt has been taken from this article:

"The practical abolition of the Apple and Pear Board underlines the unpopularity of many Boards operating in the sphere of primary production, and raises the general issue as to whether agriculture should be organised or governed—call it what you will—or left entirely alone, each farmer relying on himself.

"I do not for a moment believe that any member of the N.C.R.M. really supports the latter alternative. Let us examine, for a moment, the result of this individualistic policy. How would the loan shark be restrained? Who would check the land-grabber whose activities are the bane of rural life? Who would allot quotas for marketing products destined for the overseas market? Or should it be first come first served, and the devil take the hindmost? How is the small man, who has to sell his product when he can, to live under the convulsive fluctuations of prices of the old system?

"A thousand questions could be asked, and the answer to them all would be that lack of some form of control would profit only the wealthy or the unscrupulous farmer, and the vested financial interest to whom the 'free-for-all' would be a veritable devil's playground. It is in the interest of the small man that some form of agricultural government is necessary. In it alone will the vast majority of small men find protection. For them the only alternative is to be eaten up one by one.

#### INDIVIDUALISM DISASTROUS

"I do not believe that there is anyone who really wishes to revert to that complete individualism which may have worked well in the Garden of Eden, but which has not worked since. Some form of government there must be: equally, however, whatever form of Government is chosen must be good, just, efficient.

"Now who can govern agriculture? There are three alternatives:

- (1) The Federal or State Governments.
- (2) The Federal Department of Commerce or the State Departments of Agriculture.
- (3) The farmers themselves.

"The first alternative is included simply for the sake of form. For generations to come it will be utterly unreal to expect that the politicians we elect will possess either a sound philosophy of the land, or a sufficient knowledge of the technical details of which agriculture is so full. Until there is a re-distribution of Australia's population—and, though this must come, it will take many years—it is inevitable that the majority of our politicians will come from the cities, and will have only the average city man's knowledge of the land. Clearly the politician is not fitted for this most urgent national task.

"In actual fact political control is nearly always departmental control. The politician, in his complete ignorance of the vital subject matter in which he is dealing, almost invariably seeks refuge in the specialised knowledge of departmental heads.

"Nobody can cavil for a moment at the real ability of the majority of these men, or at the disinterested ideal of public service by which the majority of them regulate their conduct. Their limitations, however, are as important as their abilities. They are given their positions not because of their capacity to decide policy, but



because of their mastery of detail. They are not elected and are not responsible to public opinion. When asked to go beyond the working out of details to the decision of grave matters of public policy, they are set a task which it is unfair to ask them to undertake, and the country has set its course on the way of bureaucratic rule, responsible to no democratic checks.

"The third alternative is the only possible policy—that the farmers themselves should control agricultural policy and administration. The first two alternatives have been tried and have failed. The third deserves a chance."

#### CHAPTER III.

### *The Christian Principle of Social Organisation*

THERE are two competing ideas of social organisation in the modern world—the totalitarian and the Christian. The totalitarian idea—which is not confined to the followers of Hitler and Stalin and Mussolini—is roughly this: that all forms of social organisation should be controlled by the State, that no matter how large or how small the matter to be decided, it is the State that shall decide. And if this involves bureaucracy, as indeed it must in the modern world with so many things to be decided—industrial, agricultural, medical, legal, social, economic, cultural, educational and a thousand others—then bureaucracy it must be, in the name of the security of the individual, the efficiency of industry, and the might of the State.

The totalitarian idea is carried to its logical conclusion in Germany, Russia and Italy. But it exists in every country where people look to the Government for everything in the social, economic and cultural life of the community. The modern cry: "What is the Government doing about it?" uttered whenever a problem arises, whatever its nature, is the door wide open beckoning in totalitarian rule. For Governments are only too ready to take all the power which is offered to them.

#### "CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER"

The Christian idea is vastly, entirely different. It is well expressed in the book, "Christianity and the Social Order," by the present Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury.

This is how the Archbishop describes it:\*

"No man is fitted for an isolated life: everyone has needs which he cannot supply for himself; but he needs not only what his neighbors contribute to the equipment of his life but their actual selves as the complement of his own. Man is naturally and incurably social.

Recent political theories have given ostensible emphasis to this truth and have then, as a rule, gone far to ignore it. Certainly our social organisation largely ignored it. For this social nature of man is fundamental to his being. I am not first someone on my own account who happens to be the child of my parents, a citizen of Great Britain, and so forth. If you take all these social relationships away, there is nothing left. A man is talking nonsense if he says: 'Well, if I had been the son of someone else . . . etc.' He IS his parents' son: what he is supposing is not that HE should be someone else's son, but that HE should not exist and someone else should exist instead. By our mutual influence we actually constitute one another as what we are. This mutual influence finds its first field of activity in the family; it finds other fields later in school, college, Trade Union, professional association, city, county, nation, Church.

\* "Christianity and the Social Order."

"Now actual liberty is the freedom which men enjoy in these various social units. But most political theories confine attention to the individual and the State as organ of the national community; they tend to ignore the intermediate groupings. But that makes any understanding of actual liberty impossible; for it exists for the most part in and through those intermediate groups—the family, the Church or congregation, the guild, the Trade Union, the school, the university, the Mutual Improvement Society.

"Liberty is actual in the various cultural and commercial and local associations that men form. In each of these a man can feel that he counts for something and that others depend on him as he on them. The State which would serve and guard Liberty will foster all such groupings, giving them freedom to guide their own activities provided these fall within the general order of the communal life and do not injure the freedom of other similar associations. Thus the State becomes the Community of Communities—or rather the administrative organ of that Community—and there is much to be said for the contention that its representative institutions should be so designed as to represent the various groupings of men rather than (or as well as) individuals.

"This point has great political importance; for these relationships exist in the whole network of communities, associations and fellowships. It is in these that the real wealth of human life consists. If then it is the function of the State to promote human well-being, it must foster these many groupings of its citizens."

That is a long quotation, but it is an excellent explanation of the real nature of the social relationships which go to make the full life of the individual and the real life of the Community.

The great point is this. All of those "communities, associations and fellowships" are the bulwark of personal freedom against the attempt of the State to dominate every aspect of the life of the individual.

The Catholic doctrine on this matter is very positive. In "Quadragesimo Anno," Pius XI. laid it down quite categorically that whatever can be done by the smaller or lower organisation should be carried out by it, and not by the higher organisation. This means that what can be done by the individual should be done by him; whatever can be done by the family—the raising and the education of children, for example—should be done by it; whatever can be done by municipal (or shire) organisations should be done by them; whatever can be done by vocational or professional organisations in the government of their vocation should be done by them.

#### SOCIETY AND ORGANISM

This principle of organic Society has been expressed thus:

"The social organism is like the organism of the human body in that it must be made up of different organs to be perfect. This simply means that our social life will not be a full one, if we have only one Society (the State), or very few societies, just as our bodily life will not be a full one, if our body is without organs, such as a tongue, eyes and the like.

"Rather we must have in addition to the State many other societies, or social organs as we may call them—to be precise, as many other societies as any number of citizens may have interests which they wish to prosecute in common.

"Each of these societies is necessary to perform some special function for society, exactly as the eye is required to see for the living body, or the stomach to digest for it.

"In particular, we must have a family society for the man and woman who wish to rear up children together; we must have local councils among those who live in the same area or district; we must have the Church—that is the society of those preparing for the life to come in the way Christ prescribed; we must have the occupational society, as it is called, for those who spend their time at the same calling. These five societies—that is, the four just specified, and the State—are as indispensable for healthy social life as the stomach, the heart and the other organs are for healthy bodily life.

"Each of them, therefore, is to have a certain degree of independence in acting, just as the heart or the stomach is independent of the head in its functions. The State for instance, should no more take on itself to do the work of other societies than the head should take on itself to digest food. The State, like the head, may direct these other Societies in their activities. But that is the limit of its competence."

It will be thoroughly clear that we are NOT demanding the setting up of new organisations. We are simply claiming that organisations which already exist, as part of the basic material of society, should be allowed to function, that their functions should not be swallowed up by the State.

Many Australians believe in decentralisation. They have in mind only geographical decentralisation—the spread of industries through country areas, the encouragement of provincial cities and so on. This kind of decentralisation is important. Freedom, however, demands that in addition we have a decentralisation of administration, the State divesting itself of functions which can be effectively handled by subordinate bodies—the family, the municipality, the occupation, trade or profession.

What is essential, however, is that these smaller bodies should be given statutory legal powers. Once the functions of these smaller bodies have been defined, they should be given all the authority necessary to fulfil those functions. The more effectively to realise this aim it should be recognised from the beginning that where a particular function can be carried out by a smaller body, it should in no case be handed over to a higher body. This famous principle of "subsidiarity" enunciated by Pope Pius XI. in "Quadragesimo Anno" is the very foundation of freedom, which must in the end be destroyed if the principle is violated.

This decentralisation of administration is necessary not only in the quest of what some may regard as the vague ideal of personal freedom. It is necessary if a break-down in our entire system of administration is to be avoided.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Vocational Australian Industry*

IN the sphere of industry, proposals for vocational control have been worked out in some detail. The best treatment is given in an article entitled "The Industrial Council in the New Order," by F. K. Maher, published in the "Australian Ecclesiastical Record." The article is here reprinted in part, since, although its details refer to industry rather than to agriculture, it gives a thorough explanation of how the ideals which have been described may best be put into practice.

"In the course of an excellent study of Vocational Organisation in the "Irish Monthly," Archdeacon John Kelleher wrote:

'A greater and more fatal mistake still would be to regard the vocational group ideal as a beautiful piece of social theory, and that we are doing our duty towards it if we speak about it, explain it, point out its perfection, quote its striking passages, and by its aid solve the problem of our social disorganisation on paper. The Pope desires earnestly, passionately, that vocational groups should be established, not merely studied or lectured about, and it was for that purpose he wrote about them in the Encyclical.'

"We, too, in Australia, have heard a great deal (fortunately) about organic society in the last few years. Our minds are beginning to appreciate, to sift and to analyse the ideas behind the "organic" principle. In the two statements on Social Justice, issued with the approval of the Australian Hierarchy, the notion of Industrial Councils was given some attention. But there is a danger that we, too, may regard it as a "beautiful piece of social theory" and refuse to take the risk of translating our dreams into action. For there is always the risk of advancing proposals that are not quite practical, of exposing one's views to stern criticism—and many people shrink from this task.

"Yet the risk must be taken of making mistakes and raising contentious points if we are to have Industrial Councils recognised and established in Australia in the next decade. I do not disguise my strong personal opinion that, whatever other gains may be made, we shall not have achieved any lasting solution of our difficulties unless we have Australian industry reorganised on these lines. Did not Pius XI. declare in "Quadragesimo Anno" that:

'As things now are, the wage-system divides men on what is called the labour-market into two sections, resembling armies; and the disputes between these sections transform this labour-market into an arena where the two armies are engaged in fierce combat. To this grave disorder which is leading society to ruin, a remedy must evidently be applied as speedily as possible. But there cannot be question of any perfect cure unless this opposition be done away with and well-organised members of the social body be constituted, namely, vocational groups claiming the allegiance of men, not according to the position they occupy in the labour market but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society. . . .'

"In the last few years, however, I have had ample opportunity of discussing the practical implications of Papal doctrine with business men and economists. Thus the thoughts put forward here have been the subjects of much hard argument, and I am assured by Catholic representatives of both management and labour that they are really workable. It is most important that the Catholic executive and worker should be put to thinking out the practical effects of organic society as soon as possible. My purpose is then to set out the essentials of a definite plan so that it may be criticised and improved. Further, I want to point to numerous encouraging trends in Australia which should give us confidence in going ahead with the propagation of our ideas.

"In the last fifty years some outstanding thinkers have realised that society has become dangerously over-centralised; that it is this centralisation which made possible the rise of dictators—of huge parasite cities, of concentrations of capital in a few hands, which in turn produce the concentration of political power in a few officials. They see that there must be a process of 'breaking-down,' of re-distributing power and influence over a wider area, of building up rural life and country towns, of a proper 'regional' basis for our political and social organisation.

### SELF GOVERNMENT IN INDUSTRY

"Above all, for our purpose (we are concerned primarily with economics here), we need a new principle whereby industrial life can be made more independent, more ordered, more harmonious, more stable. Most men to-day see first that the old order of rugged individualism, industrial capitalism, or whatever you may call it, is finished. Only a few blind re-actionaries hope to revive it. What other form of industrial government is possible? Here the academic reformers raise their voice: 'Only socialism can be the solution,' they say. 'The individual has failed, the community must take over. It is best that all industry come into the hands of State Departments.' Many Marxists are prepared to have this happen fairly slowly and by peaceful means: others are determined to use violence if their wishes are opposed.

"There is, however, one alternative; one based on the soundest of philosophy: one sanctified by its Christian origin, strengthened by its deep roots in human nature . . . that alternative is to hand over the control of an industry to the people actually engaged in that industry.

"What we suggest is that industry be divided into its most natural and important divisions, and that for each major industry there should be established a National Industrial Council. That Council should consist of representatives of employers and employees in equal numbers, and representatives appointed by the community, to look after the interests of the consumer. The State should delegate to it definite authority to enable its control to be effective.

"What would this Industrial Council do? It is impossible to set out in detail all the powers which it should have. In a talk to a group of Catholic executives recently, I suggested that at least it should have authority:

1. To control wages and conditions of the industry. Obviously no outside body could ever know the intricacies of the business better than the people engaged in it, or be fitter to decide what the employees should receive. This would not necessarily do away with our Arbitration System; if possible, the questions of wages and conditions should be settled either on the job or within the industry by peaceful discussion. If that

is not possible then recourse can be had to the Arbitration Court, as at present. But obviously the Arbitration System at the moment does not produce industrial peace, but divides workers and employers into two hostile classes—both of which are afraid to make concessions. As Stanley James pointed out in the 'Catholic Herald' recently: 'The war itself has forced upon us the need for a change in the motive of industry. One of the complaints most frequently voiced is that both employers and employees are still under the influence of the discarded system which gave prime consideration to the increase respectively of profits and wages. Owing to this, it is said, both parties are guilty of adopting methods adverse to the national interest. Even under a system which puts that interest first, the mental habits begotten in former days continue. And it is this, it is alleged, which is affecting, in both quantitative and qualitative sense, the production of supplies.'

### CONTROL PRICES

2. To control prices for the goods produced by the industry. This power again might well be exercised under the supervision of a body appointed by Parliament, such as the present Prices Commission—so that there would be no exploitation of the public—but, obviously, the people in the industry are again most qualified to fix the prices of their products. This control could be quite flexible and thus approximate closely to the notion of the 'Just Price.'

3. To control dividends. This would not necessarily mean to place all dividends on the one rigid basis. There should however, be definite maximum limits imposed so that those with greater economic power should not be able to reap too great a reward at the expense of their competitors. I find the average business man increasingly ready to accept reasonable limits on profits.

4. To decide the amount and the quality of the goods produced in the industry. It is vital that production should be 'ironed out'; that disastrous booms and depressions—due largely to faulty estimates and the frenzy of competition—should be eliminated. Otherwise we have no hope of preventing unemployment or future depressions. Quality is also a matter to which industry pays far too little attention, though the increase in 'shoddy' material shows a serious lowering of our standards of values.

Every large organisation to-day has its own Research Department—sometimes, as with the Oil Companies, for technical research; sometimes, as with the great Life Insurance Companies, for forecasting demand and supply.

For lack of co-ordination (and often of information carefully concealed by competitors) the research is often incomplete and inaccurate. A National Council would be able to estimate future trends to a degree of accuracy quite impossible to-day.

It would also be able to take the general public into its confidence and pull aside the veil of secrecy that some firms have carefully drawn over their activities. An interesting series of articles in 'Rydge's Journal', by C. Ward Ambler (August, 1941) reveals how many high-ranging executives in the U.S.A. and Australia have now realised the serious social and economic effects of this secretive policy.

## SOCIAL WELFARE

5. To look after the **social welfare** of all engaged in the industry, including protection against unemployment, pensions for old age and sickness, and perhaps contributory insurance schemes. This would enable us to do away with State Relief and its accompanying stain of the "dole," whereas, if a man has contributed towards these things, he realises he is only getting back what is due to him—and this preserves his self-respect.

This is the only way to divert the universal clamour for 'Social Services' into proper channels, and to prevent their becoming instruments of tyranny in the hands of an inflated bureaucracy. When the responsibility of providing for those it puts out of work is thrown on to the industry itself, we have a hope of preventing widespread unemployment, and its consequences.

6. To attend to the co-operative **marketing** of products of the industry. There has been a big trend in this direction recently, but it has not gone far enough. Marketing should be a matter of joint planning, again not necessarily by Government Departments or outside bodies, but by the people most concerned.

7. To limit the **number of enterprises**. Under the fluid conditions of the last century, it was easy to transfer capital from one enterprise to another, and thus a chronic instability was set up. What seemed a profitable industry attracted much capital and many workers. These were often seriously affected when conditions suddenly changed. (There is a danger in allowing limits on the number of enterprises because certain sections might get hold of the industry and refuse to allow even legitimate competition; but this would have to be watched).

8. To plan **technical education**, apprenticeship and general training of those who are to take part in the industry. In this way the industry could make sure of having competent, thoroughly trained workmen and technicians, could give them a pride in their craft and make them feel they had a sense of responsibility for their work.

## DIGNITY OF LABOR

If this were combined with a sane system of vocational education, and if scientific methods can be adopted to lessen the deadening effects of monotony and routine in factories, we might gradually be able to give our workers a sense of creativeness in their daily toil. This would enable the worker to appreciate what the Church means by the 'dignity of labour,' and his capacity to achieve his eternal destiny by regarding his job as a vocation and a means of acquiring grace. To expect him to see this fundamental doctrine under the conditions of the contemporary factory is to expect a minor miracle.

"We have spoken of **National Industrial Councils**. These would look after the welfare of the industry as a whole, but there would need also to be subsidiary bodies with lesser powers. Thus there would be Provincial or Regional Councils for an area like Melbourne or, say, the Riverina. Then again there could be **Shop or Factory Councils**, with lesser powers, particularly those of settling disputes on the spot. (The relation of these to the Board of Directors of the Firm would have to be worked out. Generally, the position would

be that the Board of Directors would work under the general conditions laid down by the National Council for the industry, but would otherwise retain its former freedom of action).

"There are certain essentials which must be remembered to get a proper appreciation of an Industrial Council.

"It must be given **statutory powers**. Legal force must be applied to its decisions by the Council itself. It is necessary that the State should hand over to an Industrial Council powers to make regulations, to impose fines, to enforce discipline for breaches of regulations. This was one of the secrets of the success of the older Guilds. Such power may, of course, be used tyrannically, but this is far truer of powers vested in Government Departments by regulations to-day.

"The Industrial Council is not a purely economic body. It has a natural life of its own. It is concerned with education, social welfare, good feeling—as well as with wages and dividends.

"It is not a part of the political system. It does not attempt to supplement or dominate Parliament. People will continue to elect their representatives in Parliament, and Parliament will remain supreme over all Industrial Councils. It will be for the Legislature to decide on the general policy, to supervise working of all Councils and to give or take away their powers, as it wishes. But, there will be no party-system in Industrial Councils, and they will not attempt to decide political questions.

"Such a system would have obvious advantages. It fits the nature of man. Man is neither a god nor a beast, but part of both. Man must be free—but there must be limits to his freedom. He can be trusted to a great extent—but not completely. Instinctively he realises the need for the 'natural associations' that will allow for initiative without anarchy. Such industrial associations are found back in the very dawn of history; in primitive towns, in the cities of the East, of Rome, of Constantinople. It is said that there were some eighty guilds in ancient Ireland. Of course, the Guild System was the highly successful feature of five hundred years of mediaeval life; never has an industrial system worked so smoothly. Only in the last two hundred years have men in the same occupation found it good to cut one another's throats to make a living.

"It enables man to have some control over the way in which he earns his living. It is a great tragedy that the modern worker feels that 'he does not count' in the industrial machine. That is one reason why he misuses his employer's equipment and wastes his employer's time, and gets that thwarted feeling that accounts for so much in Communism. So we must give the worker the feeling of satisfaction. That is his right. It would be better if he could be an owner, but in large industries men cannot be owners as individuals.

"We must give them, then, the best substitute: a share in management. The war has shown that workers, if given a chance, will readily contribute valuable suggestions for improvements in technique. An article in 'Trusts and Estates'—an American Journal of Capital Management—praises the high degree of co-operation and of technical development as a result of the establishment of Labour Management Committees by the War Production Board in the U.S.A.

"The Industrial Council should help men to acquire property. Property and not income is the criterion of freedom and prosperity. Income may come and go, but property remains. Only the man who owns property is really free. Every property owner is a bulwark against violent revolution. An Industrial Council will not of itself give him ownership, but it will be a powerful instrument to that end: it will limit the inequality of wealth, will raise wages to such a degree that the worker will be able to save and thus acquire property . . . ."



## CHAPTER V.

### *The Self-Government of Rural Life*

**I**T is in the sphere of industry that the most detailed blue-print of the functioning of a properly organised society has been most fully described. It is to explain this blue-print and to show its relationship to an organic society that the previous chapter has been included. It is, however, in the sphere of agriculture that the first practical attempt at organising such a system of administration has actually been attempted.

Reference is here made to the War Agricultural Committees which were announced by the Minister for Commerce (Mr. Scully) on the 29th September, 1942. The statement which was issued on that day by the Minister is worth repeating:

"A revolutionary change has been made in Australian agriculture by the Government's decision to bring a system of planned production right down to the man on the land, and to give him the opportunity of playing an important part in the solution of his own problems and those of carrying out nation-wide Government policy. This will be done by means of District War Agricultural Committees, whose functions on organising rural man-power have already been publicised.

"Farmers will be keenly interested in how these Committees will work, and how each individual farmer can play his part.

"Planning on an Australia-wide basis will naturally be a Commonwealth Government responsibility, and provision has been made for this through the co-operation of Commonwealth Departments concerned with the Commerce Department; the latter being directly associated with the State Ministers for Agriculture in what is called the Agricultural Council. Decisions of Australia-wide policy will pass on to each State Department of Agriculture, which in turn will be the State executive for the District War Agricultural Committees. Each State Department of Agriculture will divide its State into District Areas of convenient size, for example, there are 31 committees in New South Wales, and will appoint committees representative of the farmers and country towns, under the Chairmanship of an experienced officer of the Department of Agriculture, who will act as organiser and as the link to the State Executive. Local Areas will then be invited to voluntarily appoint local committees to be attached as subsidiary bodies to the District Committee. In most areas there are existing committees which can act as the local bodies."

The Government has set production goals for certain products and later will set goals for all important rural commodities. These goals will be divided into State quotas and then district quotas. The District Committee will then survey the position for its area and see how that quota can be obtained if such is possible. Questions of man-power, machinery, transport and many other lesser problems will immediately arise. The farmer will have direct access to the local committees, and they in their turn will understand his individual problem, the men he requires and the products he produces. In turn, the local bodies will report to the District Committee so that it will again have the "local touch." Requirements can

then be passed on to the State Department of Agriculture who, with close collaboration with the Manpower Authority of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce, can carry out action necessary. It is not suggested that all needs can be met; on the contrary, Australia with only 7,000,000 people is fighting a war whose demands on her are over-heavy for her available manpower and equipment facilities.

Production under difficult conditions is inevitable. But can anyone suggest a better way of organising production than central control which goes right down to the farmer and provides for an understanding of his individual needs such as can only come from local information? This statement is more than an explanation of a new system; it is also an appeal to farmers. So much will depend on each farmer's interest and co-operation. No doubt many will have experienced a time when a disastrous flood, a destructive bush-fire or a "never-seeming-to-end" drought has desolated his district. He will remember how the community instinct rose superior to the calamity, how he assisted others in the rescue of stock, the vital repair of fences, the feeding of stock and even the rescue of human lives and the provision of food and housing for those who had lost them, and how others in turn had helped him. The country suffers now a crisis in manpower throughout its areas no whit less calamitous, and this community interest will, it is believed, rise superior to the troublous times, and in doing so will give the District and local committees the support which they need in the hard work ahead of them. "Community Interest" will surely be the watchword of the future.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *Composition and Functions of War Agricultural Committee*

The structure of the War Agricultural Committee Organisation can best be understood by means of a diagram.

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.** As explained in the first chapter of this pamphlet, the Standing Committee on Agriculture (together with the Australian Agricultural Council) assures co-ordination between the Federal authority and the various State authorities in the sphere of agriculture. On the Standing Committee, the Commerce Department and each of the State Departments of Agriculture are represented through their permanent heads.

**STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.** Acting under the above body, the State Departments of Agriculture have been entrusted with the task of putting the entire War Agricultural Committee Organisation into operation. It is the Department of Agriculture which sets up the State Executive of the War Agricultural Committees which is the final controlling body in each State. This Executive is entrusted with the task of approving the personnel of all District Committees and Local Committees.

The policy which is decided upon by the Federal authority is transmitted to these committees through the agency of the State Department of Agriculture which remains the body finally responsible for the working of the entire organisation.

**THE DISTRICT WAR AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE.** These exist in different numbers in every State, 31 in New South Wales, 17 in Victoria, and so on. In Victoria they are sometimes known as the "Regional" Committees. The

normal District (or Regional) Committee is made up of representatives of farmers, farm labourers and business men, meeting under the chairmanship of a representative of the Department of Agriculture. Nominations to these Committees are made by the Department.

## THE LOCAL COMMITTEES.

Under each District (or Regional) War Agricultural Committee, a valuable number of Local Committees function. The District Committee represents a large geographic region. The Local Committees represent all the various localities within each geographic region. The Local Committee is composed in various ways. As yet there is no one principle of composition. Generally each primary producers' organisation operating in the locality. Herd-testing Associations, Agricultural Societies, etc., are represented together with employees' and business men's representatives.

## NOMINATION OF MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

The members of both the District and the Local Committees are appointed and not elected. All nominations to both sets of Committees must be appointed by the State Executive of the War Agricultural Committee or its representatives.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE WAR AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE ORGANISATION

The functions with which the organisation was entrusted originally is explained in the following extract from a resolution adopted by the Standing Committee on Agriculture:

"That the Committees in each State functioning directly under the Department of Agriculture assist that Department in the following responsibilities:

- (i) Studying the man-power requirements and resources of the district and methods of organising the labour supply.
- (ii) Advising on the relative claims of different industries to the services of the available labour having regard to the national production policy.
- (iii) Co-operating with the Manpower Directorate in securing and utilising for the priority industries of the district, labour required from sources outside the district.
- (iv) Obtaining the production quota allotted to the district as part of national production goals.
- (v) Collaborating with the Manpower Authorities and the representatives of the Commonwealth and State Statisticians in all matters affecting the district.

"That these War Agricultural Committees be approved as forming by their association with the Departments of Agriculture, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and the Australian Agricultural Council, part of the machinery for directing, stimulating, and controlling agricultural production during the war."

To-day the functions of the War Agricultural Committee include the keeping a constant watch on the manpower requirements of the district, the pooling of manpower, accommodation for seasonal workers, transport of harvest workers, requirements of volunteer labour production, goal quotas and priorities.

## CHAPTER VII.

## *Judgment on the War Agricultural Committee Organisation*

At the 1943 National Convention of the National Catholic Rural Movement, the following resolution was passed:

"That this Movement declares its support of the principles underlying the Government plan of War Agricultural Committees, and, while working to make them a more democratic instrument of the views of farmers, it enjoins upon all its members to give them their maximum support."

It was made abundantly clear in the earlier part of this pamphlet that the Christian cannot be neutral in any questions of social organisation, whether it be industrial or rural. There is a specifically Christian way of looking at all of these questions so that, while Christians may differ in the technical details by which their principles are applied, there is no difference concerning the principles themselves. The almost complete identity of view on social organisation between His Holiness Pope Pius XI., in the great Social Encyclicals and the attitude of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury provides a strong emphasis for the fact.

It was made clear also that the crux of the present crisis in the relation between Christianity and the totalitarian State was the claim of the State, explicit in Germany, Russia and Italy, implicit in England, the United States and Australia, to enter into every sphere of life and to make detailed regulations on matters concerning the family, and all sorts of trades and occupations.

The Christian view-point can be summarised in the following propositions:

(1) The liberty of the individual and of the family in the modern world depends on the strict limitations of the authority of the State to spheres in which it is entitled to act.

(2) It is most undesirable that the State should intrude into matters more properly regulated by the family itself, and only slightly less undesirable that it should concern itself directly with the details of occupational regulation. The function of the State is to see that this work of regulation is done properly, but it should leave the doing to bodies more fitted to assume the task.

(3) Where an industry or any other occupation is concerned, the proper bodies to carry out the work of regulation are those composed of people engaged in the industry itself. Thus in the ship-building industry, such a body would represent workers and employers and the State. In agriculture, it would represent farmers, farm-workers, members of the country business community, agricultural experts, etc.

(4) The duty of the State is to endow these bodies with full legal power to carry out their functions within their occupation. The State can do this in the same way as under the various Local Government Acts, it endows Municipal Councils with legal power in their own municipalities.

(5) Side by side with this principle there is the other vital principle that if a small local body can do a particular job, it should be the body allotted to the task. The higher authority should never interfere unless the work is beyond the scope of the local body.

An application of this principle could be seen in the statement that the District War Agricultural Committee should not interfere in a matter which can be carried out by a Local Committee working under it.

From the Christian point of view, therefore, it cannot be denied that the War Agricultural Committee is an amazing, even startling, advance on the lines of sound social organisation. It marks a breakaway from the excessive centralisation of the administration which is the bane of Australian social life. The administration of rural legislation is put directly into the hands of members of the rural community, and, in addition, the bodies entrusted with this responsibility are small local bodies, closely in touch with the needs of their own districts.

The principle underlying the War Agricultural Committee is a magnificent advance towards the Christian idea. I have called it "startling," since it is completely inconsistent with all the tendencies to centralisation and bureaucracy which are still dominant—and increasingly so—in this country. It is accordingly vital that all Christians should recognise the opportunity presented to them for the first time and grasp it with both hands.

For it will be realised that the War Agricultural Committees need not necessarily last after the war. They are brought into existence under the war-time powers of the Commonwealth and, with the other war-time legislation, may go out of existence after the war, unless a strong demand is made for their continuance.

This unqualified approval of the principle underlying the War Agricultural Committee is not intended to cover the defects in the machinery which has been developed to date. It is the underlying principle which is fundamentally sound and Christian. The machinery has a multitude of defects which can and must be remedied.

A remedy for these defects depends on an accurate diagnosis. The following analysis has, therefore, been made:

## DEFECTS IN PRESENT STRUCTURE OF WAR AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE

### 1. LACK OF UNIFORMITY IN COMPOSITION AND CREATION.

Many farmers have complained, and with obvious justification, that the War Agricultural Committees were brought into existence without sufficient publicity, so that they were actually functioning before many farmers had any idea that they were to be formed at all.

In addition, there was no uniformity in the way in which Local Committees were created. In some districts they were simply nominated by the Shire authorities, in others a Public Meeting was called, in others again, various primary producers' organisations were asked to select representatives.

This lack of uniformity has bred confusion and, as a result, grievances have arisen in many districts. And unless these are eliminated the confidence of the rural community in the War Agricultural Committees may easily wane.

### 2. METHOD OF APPOINTMENT.

The principle of selection, rather than of election has been maintained throughout the War Agricultural Committees' Organisation. For a beginning, this was probably the better course. It will be realised, however, that the confidence of the rural community will be retained only if there is some democratic check over the appointments. There is no section of the community so quick to re-act against the reign of bureaucracy, and it is vital that this should not give rise to suspicions which will destroy the support of farmers for a principle so excellent as that which underlies the War Agricultural Committee.

In addition, the method of appointment in itself is unsatisfactory. If the appointment is made by the Shire authorities, it inevitably opens the way to personal favouritism and to individual preference. Appointment by the local representative of the Department of Agriculture is unsatisfactory as a permanent principle since it substitutes the bureaucratic for the democratic principle.

The best compromise seems to be as follows:

Once the district in which the Committee (either District or local) is to operate is declared, Primary Producers' Organisations operating in the district should be requested to apply to the authority if they wish to be represented. It would be within the discretion of the authority to determine whether the organisation concerned were functioning effectively in the district and thus entitled to representation.

Then the organisation should be required to call a public meeting of its members in the district to elect its representatives.

Where, as in the case of the District Committee, it is necessary to limit the number of members of the Committee for effective working, a combined public meeting of all primary producers' organisations might be held. And all the members together could then elect the number of representatives required.

The same procedure would apply to the representative of workers' and business men's organisations.

### 3. POWERS OF THE COMMITTEES.

For the present, the War Agricultural Committees have only advisory powers, and their decisions may be accepted or rejected at will by the State Executive. For a beginning this is probably a wise provision, until the Committees have passed the testing period successfully.

However, if this is to be a real decentralisation of administration—a real delegation of authority—this alone would not make the War Agricultural Committees anything more than a temporary way out for an administration threatened with break-down. The War Agricultural Committees must become policy-making bodies. They will not have fulfilled their real possibilities until they are given a parallel kind of authority in matters affecting local agriculture as the Shire and Municipal Council is given in matters of Local government.

In the latter case, the community is protected against the abuse of power by the Municipal Council through an appeal to the Courts. A similar precaution might be necessary in the case of the War Agricultural Committee. But its claim to an independent authority of its own cannot be denied if we are to have a sound system of rural administration.

The logical development of this process—and a development to be consciously sought after—is a Parliament of Agriculture. Standing in a position of direct responsibility to the Federal Parliament it would be an invaluable advisory body in the promulgation of rural policy. It would rescue the land from that kind of legislation which has its origin in party politics and not in the real interest of rural life.

Much ground will need to be covered before this aim of a National Rural Council is achieved. The principle of the War Agricultural Committees is, however, an excellent basis. By throwing their full weight behind the new organisations, working to purge them of their imperfections, farmers may strike a strong blow to develop the soundest system of administration which has, as yet, appeared in the Commonwealth.

